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ABSTRACT

The Youth Development Initiative (YDI) was a 5-year, $4.3 million dollar project to strengthen the management and organizational capacities of nonprofit youth-serving organizations so they could better meet expanding demands for service in their communities. Ten youth-serving organizations in Fresno, California, and 10 in Los Angeles participated in the initiative. YDI worked at improving the agencies' operations and building their infrastructure in the following management areas: (1) administration and finance; (2) facilities management; (3) fund development; (4) governance (board and executive leadership); (5) staff development and training; (6) information and technology support; (7) legal (personnel and liability management; and (8) planning and evaluation. Local and cross-site evaluations were conducted to identify organizations' accomplishments, strengths, and challenges. During the YDI, the mean annual budgets of the 20 participating youth-serving agencies at the end of the grant period increased from $570,000 to $875,000 and their average full-time staff positions increased from 9 to 17. The total number of youths served by the Fresno agencies tripled and the total served by the Los Angeles agencies increased by 20%. The organizations diversified their funding sources and increased their success rate in receiving grants by 68%. The YDI also had positive impacts on intermediary organizations, technical assistance providers, and evaluators. (MN)

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ED 468 230

How To Strengthen Youth-Serving Nonprofits?

Experiences of the James Irvine Foundation's Youth Development Initiative

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Executive Summary

A five-year, $4.3 million project of The James Irvine Foundation, the Youth Development Initiative (YDI) sought to strengthen the management and organizational capacities of ten youth-serving nonprofits in Fresno and Los Angeles. Intermediary organizations in both communities ran the program, helping the nonprofits plan and undergo assessments, arranging training, and providing technical assistance consultants. YDI's approach to building the capacity of the nonprofits had five elements: (1) using a comprehensive, organizational development model; (2) employing multi-disciplinary self-assessment tools; (3) properly sequencing the assessment, planning and intervention stages of capacity-building; (4) tailoring services to nonprofit "life cycle" stages; and (5) using intermediary organizations.

Evaluations of the YDI found that the participating agencies increased their average budgets, number of staff, diversity of funding sources and total number of youth served during the course of the project. Intermediaries were seen as critical to the Initiative's success. Stumbling blocks emerged as well, with a number of lessons for similar capacity-building programs.

Introduction

After Mitch Moore, executive director of **Heart of Los Angeles Youth** (HOLA), was profiled in a recent *Chronicle of Philanthropy* article, he jokingly referred to himself as "the poster child for burnout" in the youth development field. Moore may indeed be an exemplar in the field – not for burnout but for rapidly growing a nonprofit for young people. HOLA started with five neighborhood kids and a basketball. Now it serves 750 inner city girls and boys every week. HOLA first worked out of a Los Angeles church, and has only been an independent nonprofit since 1993. Now it has seven full-time staff and an annual budget of $600,000.

HOLA started with five neighborhood kids and a basketball. Now it serves 750 inner city girls and boys every week.

Moore says a key step in HOLA's growth was participating in The James Irvine Foundation's Youth Development Initiative (YDI). HOLA used Irvine support to create a computer network for its offices, enabling the group to track clients, manage its finances and other purposes. "Irvine provided technical resources and money for consultants to help us understand how to do our work as a nonprofit," he says, "and helped us become part of a network of other nonprofit agencies in Los Angeles."

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In Northern California, the **Fresno Regional Foundation** (FRF) participated in the Youth Development Initiative in a different way – serving as the intermediary between Irvine and ten nonprofit youth-serving agencies in the Fresno area that received grants. Jesse Arreguin, FRF's Director of Operations, supervised this intermediary work and says "the biggest challenge of YDI was finding the right formulas to implement capacity-building interventions. Each agency had different needs."

In working with the ten YDI grantees, Arreguin had to create what he calls "little capacity building dreams" that everyone in the agency had a reason to like. He often found that convincing all the stakeholders to move ahead with the program was actually harder than the capacity-building work that followed.

Arreguin says that working with YDI yielded a surprising benefit: coordinating the program for other nonprofits "improved *our* capacity as well. It helped improve our in-house processes for grantmaking, and made our Foundation keenly aware of our own management needs." And YDI helped his Foundation develop better relationships with the local youth-serving agencies – especially helpful now that FRF has started its own management support organization to serve nonprofits in the Fresno area.

At first, the Center's staff was skeptical about the whole idea of capacity-building.

The biggest success of the Fresno arm of YDI, according to Arreguin, was the **Chicano Youth Center**. Founded in 1969 and directed by Alphonso Hernandez, the Center offers education and sports programs to Hispanic, Asian and African-American youth, with a full-time staff of three, plus four part-timers and more than 400 volunteers.

At first, the Center's staff was skeptical about the whole idea of capacity-building. But once their Board of Directors bought into YDI, things began to move, and the Center decided to focus its capacity-building work on building a new facility. A YDI-funded feasibility study led to writing grant proposals to support this plan. With a total investment of $18,000 in capacity-building dollars, the Chicano Youth Center has since been able to raise $2.7 million in construction funds.

WHAT IS YDI?

The Youth Development Initiative was a five-year, $4.3 million project of the James Irvine Foundation. YDI's goal was to strengthen the management and organizational capacities of nonprofit youth-serving organizations, so that they could better meet expanding demands for service in their communities. Ten youth-serving organizations in Fresno and ten in Los Angeles participated in the Initiative.

YDI's goal was to strengthen the management and organizational capacities of nonprofit youth-serving organizations

There are, of course, many ways to go about building capacity. YDI's capacity-building strategy was to help youth-serving agencies through direct grantmaking and by providing technical assistance consultation. Intermediary organizations in each of the two California communities coordinated the Initiative's work. While the chief goal was to strengthen the twenty nonprofits that participated in the Initiative, YDI also sought to create lasting capacity-building resources for the youth development field in California.

YDI aimed at improving the agencies' operations and building their infrastructure in eight areas. These areas were adopted from a capacity-building program for youth-serving agencies in New York City, supported by DeWitt Wallace Readers Digest Fund and coordinated by the Fund for the City of New York. The eight management areas were:

1. Administration & Finance
2. Facilities Management
3. Fund Development
4. Governance (Board and Executive Leadership)
5. Staff Development & Training
6. Information and Technology Support
7. Legal (Personnel and Liability Management)
8. Planning & Evaluation

Over the last several years, The James Irvine Foundation has commissioned local and cross-site evaluations of YDI, identifying accomplishments, strengths and challenges of the program. The Initiative, which began to take shape in 1994, is among a handful of pioneer programs in the fast-growing field of capacity-building. YDI was one of the first multiyear capacity-building grantmaking initiatives to reach completion, and to be the subject of a thorough evaluation.

"The most valuable part of this Initiative was that the consultants came to us to do real, hands-on assistance. For instance, the strategic planning consultant spent considerable time with us, and before she left we had a three-year plan in our hands. We now have a document we're proud of and actually use. Also, the consultant who reviewed our computer needs made recommendations on what to get and how to set it up, but more importantly, she followed through – she actually ordered the machines for us!"

Ken Quenzar, Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County

WHAT WAS YDI'S IMPACT?

1. YDI's Impact On Youth-Serving Agencies

The evaluation documented a number of significant changes among the twenty youth-serving agencies by the end of the grant period:

- The mean annual budget of the grantees increased from $570,000 to $875,000.
- The average number of full-time staff increased from 9 to 17.
- The total number of youth served by the Fresno-based agencies nearly tripled, while a more modest 20% increase in youth served was recorded by the Los Angeles-based nonprofits.
- The organizations diversified their funding sources, and increased by 68% their success rate in receiving grant awards relative to proposals submitted. In Fresno, the ability of the youth-serving agencies to attract more than $3 million in Federal and state grants was credited to YDI's $1 million investment.

There were other impacts as well:

- Executive directors of these youth-serving agencies showed increased understanding and commitment to building a strong management infrastructure, and to making decisions framed by the "big picture" of long-term goals instead of short-term crises. Sixteen of the twenty agencies had strategic plans by the end of the Initiative, as opposed to four when YDI began.
- Many executive directors also reported that the Initiative enhanced their ability to delegate responsibility and administrative tasks. As a result, they didn't feel so overwhelmed. And YDI afforded networking opportunities with other executives that helped them solve problems and relieved anxieties about "being alone" in their leadership burden.

"The project helped us learn what it means to be an excellent nonprofit, expanding our vision as well as our capacity. It helped insure that this organization will be here for a long time - we have increased our programming because we can better manage the business end of it.

The most valuable services we received were strategic planning and board development, which helped us meet the challenges of self-definition, setting growth goals and developing implementation strategies - with a strong governance body to take us forward."

Kathy Garabed, Stone Soup Fresno

- All of the directors reported that they adopted new structures, policies and procedures in one or more of the eight YDI management areas. Some directors were able to hire staff to support their organizational changes. Others helped their agency's board allocate more time at board meetings to discuss infrastructure issues. Before the Initiative, only one-quarter of the agencies had line items in their budgets for staff training, board development, facilities management, and technology upgrades and maintenance. After the Initiative, 85% of the agencies did.

2. YDI's Impact on Intermediary Organizations and Technical Assistance Providers

Financial instability, executive director transitions, and staff-board tensions were some of the challenges facing the youth-serving agencies participating in YDI, the two intermediary organizations discovered. The intermediaries had to be flexible, to work with the individual agencies to adjust both the goals and process of capacity-building to meet changing needs. And they had to strike a balance between a reasonable degree of control on the one hand and letting the youth-serving agencies set their own pace, learn from their own mistakes, and exercise their own creative judgment on the other – a balance not unlike the kind the agencies themselves try to follow with the youth they serve.

The intermediaries had to be flexible...to strike a balance between a reasonable degree of control and letting the agencies set their own pace

The evaluation showed that the intermediaries learned a lot about how to provide capacity-building services. They also learned about youth-serving organizations in their communities, local relationships they expect to continue. For the Fresno Regional Foundation, participating in YDI also improved its responsiveness as a funder and helped launch its in-house management support organization.

From the youth-serving agency's end, selecting the right consultant was critical to success. Not all consultants were good fits for the agencies they were asked to work with. Yet in many cases consultants learned new skills and knowledge through their work with YDI, especially with respect to delivering services to nonprofit youth-serving agencies. In some cases, consultants also benefited from the networking YDI encouraged with other technical assistance providers in their communities.

Overall, the individual consultants who enjoyed the most success in YDI were those who knew the nonprofit environment as well as they did the technical subject on which they consulted. Finance, administration and technology consultants needed to coordinate carefully with each other. Their interventions needed to be client-driven, with some – but not too much – input from the intermediary.

"After the riots, we grew rapidly from 20 staff to 65 staff. We didn't know how to manage growth well. The project helped put a focus on development of fiscal systems, human resources systems, and on strengthening the board. We also developed a better system for communicating among the various divisions of our organization, which let us come together as a whole organization, and enhanced our ability to be accountable."

Johng Ho Song, Korean Youth & Community Center

3. YDI's Impact on the Evaluators

Because the evaluation started relatively late in the Initiative's life, certain kinds of data-gathering weren't possible. And the evaluators were aware that some of their most important data were subject to possible bias – either that the youth-serving agencies might be trying to "look good," or that the effects observed might come more from the new attention being paid to these agencies (many of which had little such attention in the past) than from the specific interventions.

Creating common data-gathering instruments helped lessen coordination problems among evaluators

There also were some coordination problems among the three evaluators (two local, one cross-cutting), many caused by basic differences in how the YDI model was implemented in the two communities. Creating common data-gathering instruments and interventions, when possible, was one way to lessen these difficulties. (For instance, both the Fresno and Los Angeles agencies used the same self-assessment instrument, as well as the same consulting firm to conduct the technology assessment portion of the evaluation.). The three evaluators also coordinated their efforts through regular meetings convened by Irvine that brought together all the major "players" in the Initiative.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF BUILDING CAPACITY: YDI'S EXPERIENCE

The evaluation of YDI documented some significant, positive results in both Los Angeles and Fresno. The evaluation also helped to illuminate a number of limitations and difficulties in the program design and its implementation.

Out of these evaluation findings, five distinct elements of YDI's approach to capacity-building emerged. These elements may not be unique to YDI. Nor can they be said to constitute a "model" for effective capacity-building. The field is probably still too young for such a model to come out of any one study. But in a fast-changing, rapidly-growing field, each completed program can contribute significant value to existing thinking, research, model-building and practice.[1] We present these five elements here in that context.

[1] The James Irvine Foundation funds other significant work in capacity-building – through our Cornerstone Arts Organizations program for leading nonprofit arts organizations; our Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship, promoting naturalization and civic participation among immigrant populations in this rural region of California; and our Workforce Development program for capacity-building with employment training programs in California (information on these capacity-building efforts may be found on the Foundation's website at www.irvine.org).

Element 1: Using a Comprehensive Approach

Providing capacity-building services in eight different areas (defined earlier), YDI emphasized an "organizational development" model, looking at the nonprofit's entire range of needs for growth, rather than just one service area. This organizational development model emphasized initial assessment of need and readiness for change, data-based strategic planning to define what interventions ought to be made, and a "one-stop shopping" model for providing a range of services in the eight areas.[2]

This comprehensive approach seemed to have several positive payoffs:

- **It changed how the youth-serving agencies thought about capacity-building.** In the beginning, most of the nonprofits in the YDI group thought fundraising was the only kind of capacity-building they needed. "If only we could raise the money" was the refrain.

  The evaluators found that after these nonprofits had received capacity-building interventions, their executive directors were more likely to think of building capacity as a strategic part of their overall organizational effectiveness. Because they saw it in this larger sense, they were also more likely to work collaboratively with boards, staff and volunteers to implement capacity-building activities. And they were more likely to actually *use* strategic plans once they had them. Both staff and boards started thinking in terms of capacity beyond dollar signs, and to recognize that their agency's effectiveness was tied to getting stronger in a number of other areas.

  In the beginning, most of the nonprofits thought fundraising was the only kind of capacity-building they needed.

- **It helped fundraising.** When evaluators found that many of the twenty participating nonprofits had increased both the amount of funding and the diversity of funding sources, they believed these increases were due more to having capacity-building activities in *all* facets of the organization than to specific fund-development efforts. The agencies had used strategic planning to focus their vision and understand the revenue projections needed to achieve their goals. This helped to increase their motivation to seek additional funds. These efforts also were improved by the efficiency of newly-strengthened fiscal and administrative systems.

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[2] YDI's comprehensive approach was inspired partly by one used by the DeWitt Wallace Readers Digest Fund-supported capacity-building program for youth-serving agencies in New York City (coordinated by the Fund for the City of New York). This five-year project, which started about six months before YDI, also had 20 agencies, to which comprehensive and in-depth capacity-building services were provided in seven management and administrative assistance areas. The New York project was model-driven, using Robert Quinn's "Competing Values Framework" as a theory of change to guide this work. And finally, the New York City program used an organizational assessment to begin the process of intensive capacity-building.

- **The "one-stop shopping" model created opportunities to connect different areas of capacity-building**. For instance, in several YDI agencies, board restructuring led to increased financial commitment among board members, which in turn bolstered other technical assistance aimed at creating a more stable financial situation for the nonprofit. In fact, YDI's evaluation showed that improvements sometimes occurred in management areas that were not even addressed by the program.

- **The comprehensive approach allowed a wider range of needs to be met, especially for very young nonprofits.** Because the net of resources supporting most nonprofits is so thin, and access to resources for strengthening organizational capacities tends to be limited, these organizations typically have multiple needs at any point in their life cycle. The younger nonprofits tend to need even more, because they often have never developed basic infrastructure to begin with.

- **Building trust and sharing information between capacity-builder and agency takes time, time that can be saved by using an intermediary that offers multiple areas of service.** While new consultants may have been involved in addressing the various capacity-building needs of the participating nonprofits, the intermediary had a "constant" presence with each of the grantees. This reduced the overall effort invested in building the relationships essential to success of the capacity-building operation.

  Identifying service providers also takes time, so the "one-stop shopping" model helps out on this level, too. While many larger communities today have multiple sources of capacity-building services available, these providers typically are not well coordinated.

STUMBLING BLOCK

A few of the agency directors indicated that the number of organizational areas initially identified for them to work on seemed overwhelming. Several agency directors suggested that the number of areas addressed in the "one-stop shopping" model at any one time should be limited.

Element 2: Using Organizational Self-Assessment Tools

Measurement of a nonprofit's needs and assets, and of its readiness to undergo the significant changes building capacity is likely to require, has become an important component of organizational development in the nonprofit field. For instance, the Drucker Foundation offers a *Self-Assessment Tool for Nonprofits*, organized around its "five questions all nonprofits should be able to answer." Major capacity-building initiatives such as the Fund for the City of New York program mentioned above, the National Arts Stabilization Fund, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation all have created standardized procedures for use with nonprofits.

In the case of YDI, there was a self-assessment each youth-serving agency conducted at the beginning of the project and then again for evaluation purposes. In both cases, the agency used

standard instruments coordinated by the intermediary organizations[3]. Seven of the eight management areas of YDI were covered, with technology input provided through a separate assessment tool. This self-assessment procedure had advantages:

- **Self-assessment provided data useful both for strategic planning and later for project evaluation.** In both cases, the information supplied through the standardized instrument was cross-validated through interviews, site visits and other measurement strategies.

- **Self-assessment offered a way for the intermediary to open dialogue and develop relationships with agency directors, and to challenge their thinking and management processes.** Especially for youth-serving agencies that were somewhat apprehensive about capacity-building, beginning with what they themselves had said about their agencies rather than an outsider's estimation was a plus.

STUMBLING BLOCK

The evaluators concluded that it would have been more helpful if it had been possible to get a cumulative score from the assessment instruments, so that assessments could be looked at more holistically, and comparisons made between sites. Also, the assessments provided more information on the nature of the problem than on its causes (e.g., Did an observed deficit or challenge result from poor policy, scarce resources, poor management?)

Element 3: Sequencing the Services Provided

According to the evaluation, YDI's most successful interventions tended to be those that followed a clear direction set by the agency's strategic plan - and that were developed *after* the organizational assessment was conducted. By properly sequencing assessment, planning and intervention design, the agencies were able to place the interventions in a larger context of organizational development.

The evaluators also concluded that a six-month startup period – to build trust, conduct initial assessments and explore their results before completing the strategic plan – is essential to having the greatest impact. Thus, the two-year time frame originally designed for these projects is probably too short for many initiatives of this sort. Three years would be more reasonable.

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[3] In order to measure the changes that occurred in each of the participating agencies, benchmarks and related indicators were developed in the eight management areas or dimensions of organizational performance. Lodestar Management/Research, Inc., the local evaluators, the project managers from the two intermediary organizations and Irvine program staff developed these indicators in a collaborative process. This assessment tool can be viewed by clicking here.

STUMBLING BLOCK

Many of the youth-serving organizations in YDI submitted their plans for the capacity-building project, and received their funding, *before* the intermediary could help them do a full organizational assessment. That meant they often had to go back and rework their plans after the assessment was done, since it usually identified much more precisely what their agency needed. In the end, the agencies that launched into actual capacity-building activities before the assessment were less satisfied with the results of the early interventions they received.

Element 4: Tailoring Services to Nonprofit Life Cycle Stages

YDI included both mature and maturing nonprofits, organizations at very different stages in their "life cycles." Since the developmental needs and operating characteristics of young nonprofits are quite different from those of older ones, relatively new organizations tend to need different kinds of capacity-building services. They are also likely to need more careful oversight and more assertive coaching in order to benefit from this process.

Maturing organizations were more likely than mature organizations to report great changes.

In the Los Angeles evaluation of YDI, maturing organizations were more likely than mature organizations to report great changes in administration and finance, governance, human resources and planning and evaluation resulting from the program. In particular, maturing organizations benefited the most in the area of governance. They were more likely to have created board materials, and showed greater improvement in board involvement. And overall, they sustained the most growth during the Initiative.

At the same time, some of the younger, more "grassroots-oriented" organizations had conflicted attitudes about building capacity. Though they wanted their agency to become stronger, some leaders of these young nonprofits were concerned that it would be tantamount to "selling out" if they were to adopt some of the more structured systems for management and fund development that were the expected outcomes of the capacity-building program.

Some of the older, more established showed signs of resenting "outside help."

On the other hand, some of the older, more established organizations showed signs of resenting "outside help" – they thought they were "doing fine" as they were, even though they had agreed to be included in YDI. An important lesson that may be self-evident - but proved difficult to operationalize - was the need for different approaches to gently deflect these kinds of reactions from organizations at varying life-cycle stages.

STUMBLING BLOCK

Two of the ten participants in the Fresno Youth Initiative were small organizations whose total annual operating budgets were under $25,000. According to the Fresno Regional Foundation's Jesse Arreguin, it was challenging to provide resources to these maturing organizations "without endangering the organization's sustainability by overloading them with money, responsibility, and additional workload." Sometimes these emerging nonprofits were so overwhelmed by the capacity-building activities that they felt they had lost focus on their mission. The response of FRF to this problem was to give these two agencies less monetary support, and downshift the intensity of the consulting interventions to these organizations.

Element 5: Using an Intermediary Organization

Many capacity-building programs are operated directly by the staff of their sponsoring foundations. Irvine decided to go a different route with YDI, commissioning intermediaries in Los Angeles and Fresno to serve a number of roles for the Initiative. Early on, the Foundation decided not to create new intermediaries organizations but to use existing ones, helping each to develop capacity-building functions to carry out the program.

The intermediaries in Los Angeles and Fresno were critical to the Initiative's success. They were able to play multiple intermediary roles: coach, broker, trouble-shooter. And they served an especially important role in keeping all the players informed about YDI's progress and activities. Intermediary organizations, the evaluations found, need to have a track record of success in providing capacity-building services, and credibility both with youth-serving agencies and the community at large. The two intermediaries involved in YDI were both relatively young, and neither had much in the way of a track record or credibility in providing management assistance to small and medium-sized youth-serving organizations when they began work on this project. What they did have was a good reputation in their respective communities, committed managers for the intermediary effort, and the credibility provided by the Irvine Foundation's grant to them.

STUMBLING BLOCK

The intermediary organization model for capacity-building may work better overall when the intermediary is *not* also a funder in the community. At Fresno Regional Foundation (the intermediary for the Fresno projects), for instance, the same person coordinated the capacity-building work and served as a program officer, and later as interim executive director, for the Foundation. Since the Fresno Regional Foundation was a prominent funder in its community, there were some problems in keeping an appropriate "firewall" between the capacity-building role (where nonprofits' honesty about their problems and needs for help is crucial to success) and the funder role, despite good planning and intent.

WHAT IS YDI'S HISTORY?

Irvine's Youth Development Initiative sprang from two parallel trends at the beginning of the 1990's: (1) an increasing need for community-based programs that offered out-of-school activities to youth, with corresponding growth in the youth development field, both nationally and in California; and (2) the emerging emphasis of foundations, in California and elsewhere, toward strengthening nonprofits through capacity-building. While the YDI program evolved as it was implemented, these two trends played a big role in shaping the program's objectives.

1. **Needs in the Youth Development Field** YDI started because Irvine wanted to invest strategically in youth-serving organizations, in response to national trends in youth development – especially the increased importance of these nonprofits in addressing the challenges facing America's youth. The Carnegie Corporation report, *A Matter of Time*, released in the early 1990's, had drawn attention to the fragmented, uncoordinated, and under-financed state of youth-serving agencies, many of which were staffed with individuals who had little training in work with adolescents.

   At the same time, the youth development field was starting to become more professional. Both theories and professional standards were being developed that could be used to address some of the shortcomings the Carnegie report had noted.

   In California, public out-of-school programs were disappearing, and community-based nonprofits were called on to pick up the slack.

   In California, there was a related concern: publicly-funded out-of-school activity programs were disappearing, and community-based nonprofit youth-serving agencies were called on to pick up the slack. Also, youth-serving agencies in Southern California at the time were receiving an infusion of funding in the aftermath of the Los Angeles civil unrest. But real questions were arising about whether these agencies could absorb either the increased client load or the increased resources without difficulty or, in some cases, organizational collapse.

2. **Growth of the Capacity-Building Field** Traditionally, foundations have given grants to support specific programs and services, or perhaps for "bricks and mortar" construction projects. But in the last few years, more foundations have begun giving grants aimed at strengthening the management, leadership and technology infrastructure of nonprofits themselves.

   Such support for capacity-building has become a major movement in American philanthropy. A recent study conducted for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation by the Human Interaction Research Institute shows that more than 200 foundations in the United States, both large and small, are investing resources in capacity-building grants and programs.

   Some support only their own grantees, while others (like YDI) are grantmaking initiatives, which are open to many nonprofits in the community. In some cases, particularly with

community foundations, the funder actually operates a technical assistance program; in others, the funders provide grant support so nonprofits can hire their own consultants.

In addition, in many communities across the country, there are management support organizations, which offer capacity-building services to local nonprofits, often funded by foundations in the area. Services also may be provided by individual consultants, nonprofit associations or nonprofit management training programs based in universities.

WHO WERE THE ACTORS IN YDI?

The James Irvine Foundation worked with a number of partners to create the Youth Development Initiative: the twenty youth-serving nonprofits in two communities that received grants from the Foundation, the two intermediary organizations, three evaluators, and a dissemination consultant. The chart below identifies these partners and shows how they related to each other.

Youth Development Grantees The 20 youth-serving agencies in Fresno and Los Angeles which received grants were:

Fresno	Los Angeles
▪ Barrios Unidos	▪ Boys & Girls Club of Camarillo
▪ Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County	▪ Los Angeles Boys & Girls Club
▪ Central Valley YMCA	▪ Boys & Girls Club of San Pedro
▪ Chicano Youth Center	▪ Korean Youth and Community Center
▪ Hope Now for Youth	▪ Challengers Boys & Girls Club of Metro Los Angeles
▪ Marjaree Mason Center	▪ Watts/Willowbrook Boys & Girls Club
▪ Policy Activity League	▪ P.F. Bresee Foundation
▪ Stone Soup Fresno	▪ Blazer Youth Services Community Club
▪ Turn on to Teens	▪ Heart of Los Angeles Club
▪ Westside Youth Center	▪ Boys & Girls Club of Venice

YDI included both "mature" youth-serving agencies – well-established, larger nonprofits, some of them affiliated with national organizations such as the Boys & Girls Clubs – and maturing" ones – relatively new, smaller-budget nonprofits, often just making the transition to having paid rather than volunteer staff.

Intermediary Organizations In Los Angeles, *Community Partners* is a management service organization acting as a kind of "business incubator" for dozens of new nonprofits; it also conducts or manages a number of projects for California foundations, most of them oriented to capacity-building in the education or human services arenas. The *Fresno Regional Foundation* is a relatively new community foundation, which also has been funded recently by

the Packard Foundation to develop the Nonprofit Resource Center, a management support organization for the Fresno community. So both intermediaries are now solidly in the capacity-building business, though FRF's entry is more recent.

The intermediaries were responsible for program design, implementation and monitoring in their respective locations. For each of the participating nonprofits, they conducted in-depth organizational assessments, organized training workshops and networking opportunities, provided direct consultation, and identified consultants for individualized technical assistance and more in-depth interventions.

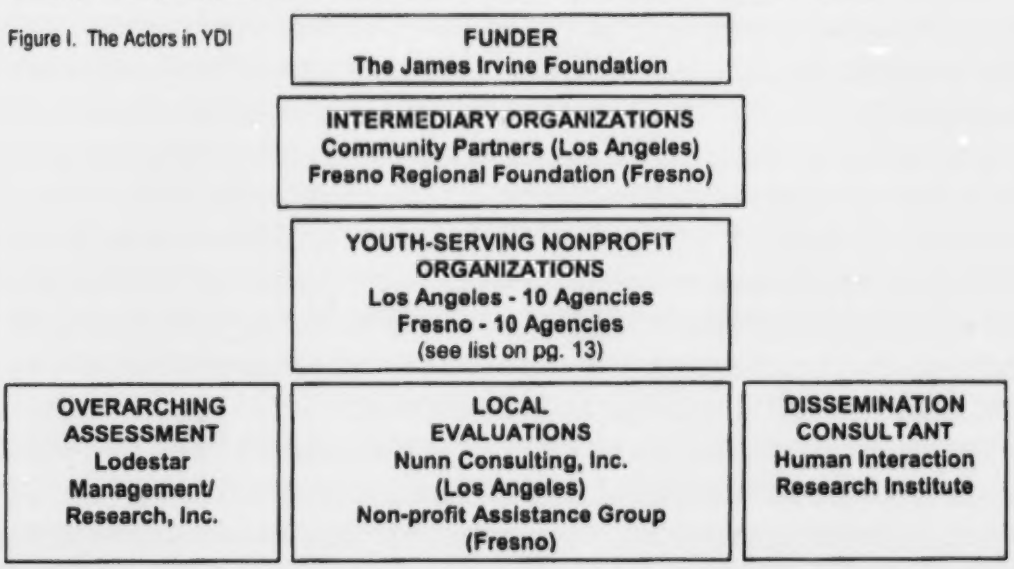
The intermediaries were responsible for program design, implementation and monitoring.

Technical Assistance Providers Experienced consultants from the nonprofit arena were identified for each of the two communities, providing an average of four services per agency. Consultants' work led to new organizational development activities at almost all of the youth-serving agencies, including written strategic plans, board manuals, board recruitment plans and board assessments.

Evaluators The overarching assessment and the local evaluations began at about the same time in January 1997. *Lodestar Management/Research, Inc.*, an independent consulting firm, evaluated the overall accomplishments of YDI, using a combination of document review, interviews and site visits. Local evaluations of the projects' processes and outcomes were conducted by *Nunn Consulting* in Los Angeles and the *Non-profit Assistance Group* in Fresno.

Dissemination Consultant Evaluation findings and the observations of grantees and intermediaries made it clear that YDI has products and findings that could be of value for various audiences. Beginning in February 1999, the nonprofit *Human Interaction Research Institute* developed a dissemination strategic plan for sharing YDI's products and findings, using a variety of print and interpersonal vehicles. This report is one of them.

Figure I. The Actors in YDI



How was YDI implemented?

These partners have worked together since 1994, first planning for YDI (which was primarily an internal Foundation activity, assisted by some consultants), then implementing the Initiative, and more recently evaluating its process and outcomes and preparing for dissemination.

What the Youth-Serving Agencies Did

The youth-serving agencies in the Initiative received grants from Irvine averaging $100,000, which they used both to purchase technical consulting services, and in some cases to hire staff. Up to 20% of the total grant could be used for the latter purpose. They also participated in a sequence of training events set up by the intermediary organization in their communities. In some cases, the intermediary also helped the agencies network and share information with each other.

With this support, the nonprofits developed strategic plans, improved their fundraising, and took advantage of development opportunities for their boards and executive directors. A number of the nonprofits supported by YDI made significant changes in their technology infrastructure as well, on both the hardware and software side.

Less progress was made in the other management areas that YDI addressed. For instance, only a few of the twenty nonprofits improved their facilities management, and since most already had access to legal counsel, few enhanced their activities in this arena through YDI. Finally, only a few of the agencies improved their evaluation systems as a result of the program.

What the Intermediary Organizations and Technical Assistance Providers Did

In addition to organizing and administering the Initiative, and connecting youth-serving agencies with technical assistance consultants, the two intermediary organizations provided individualized coaching and problem-solving on many aspects of capacity-building to YDI grantees. Each intermediary had a professional staff member in charge of its YDI work. They served as representatives of the intermediary in working with Irvine, and took on a range of both formal and informal roles to help in the complicated art of strengthening a nonprofit in up to eight different areas of functioning.

"The greatest challenge we faced was getting the Board together for strategic planning, and to have them understand that their input was needed for planning the next year, two years from now, three years from now..."

Alphonso Hernandez, Chicano Youth Center

The intermediaries conducted the initial organizational assessments with each nonprofit, and helped each agency's board and staff understand the results as they developed a plan for capacity-building. Both for the younger and the more mature youth-serving agencies, the intermediaries provided on-the-spot diagnoses and problem-solving for intermittent crises. At the same time, the intermediaries sometimes pushed agency directors to take some

The intermediaries sometimes pushed agency directors to take measured risks to move ahead with their capacity-building goals.

measured risks in order to move ahead with their capacity-building goals. Occasionally, this involved working directly with a nonprofit's board to stimulate more active leadership commitment, and at times to clarify how the YDI funds were supposed to be used (even after they'd made the commitment to capacity-building, some of the agencies continued to hope that their YDI grant could be used for direct funding of services!).

The intermediaries arranged training workshops on various capacity-building topics for their entire group of youth-serving agencies. Levels of participation in these workshops varied. The most successful ones were highly interactive in format and built in time for informal networking among the staff participating in them from different agencies.

Intermediaries also assisted with the evaluation process, and helped the youth-serving nonprofits "take a step back" periodically to see what success they had enjoyed in strengthening their operations – and how this could be more fully realized over time. And they helped the youth-serving agencies learn from their mistakes.

Finally, the intermediaries promoted good information-sharing, and (especially in Los Angeles) helped connect agencies to each other – and to other parts of the community. One group of youth-serving agency directors in Los Angeles felt they got so much from these networking activities that, now that YDI has concluded, they've set up ways to continue their dialogue.

What the Evaluators Did

Because YDI's evaluators came in relatively late in the implementation phase of the initiative (though this was less so in Fresno than in Los Angeles), they had to get up to speed quickly, and also had to live with missed opportunities for shaping the evaluation design. But the evaluators did participate in team meetings in the latter part of YDI, helping to build consistent evaluation indicators, creating a standard assessment instrument (with potential for later use elsewhere), and setting up an evaluation approach that enabled the participating youth agencies to understand better what had resulted from capacity-building.

"Initially our greatest challenge was to commit the time required for implementation of this initiative. Now the challenge is to provide the opportunities for planning and learning that we have become accustomed to through the initiative!"

Ken Quenzar, Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County

• • •

The James Irvine Foundation's Youth Development Initiative had a number of challenges and limitations, some of which have been described in this brief report. YDI also produced constructive change in the 20 youth-serving organizations that participated in it. At the higher level, stronger organizations that are more reflective about their work are more likely to deliver better services, and also are in a better position to contribute to current practices in the youth development and capacity-building fields.

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